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**Statement on 710 Tunnel Study by Yvonne Hsu and Allison Rose
On Behalf of Rep. Adam Schiff
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The 710 freeway issue has aroused tremendous and conflicting passions among the people Congressman Schiff represents for over thirty years. Many people, particularly those dislocated by the proposed freeway or in adjacent neighborhoods, naturally fear its impact on their homes and lives. Others feel completion of the freeway would improve traffic flow and the quality of life in parts of their community and in the region as a whole.

As the representative of communities both for and against the freeway, Congressman Schiff has endeavored to find transportation solutions that make sense for the entire region – the elusive common ground. A few years ago, a new option was proposed as a potentially viable solution to traffic congestion in this area. Advancements in the design and technology of tunneling have made a proposed tunnel project a possible alternative for the 710 Freeway.

Through the reauthorization of the surface transportation bill, the Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU), Congressman Schiff requested funding for a study to evaluate a tunnel alternative to close the 710 Freeway gap in Southern California. This study would provide information about the technological and economic feasibility of such a tunnel and would consider all potentially viable corridors to close the gap. \$2.4 million for the study was included in the final version of the bill that was signed into law on August 10, 2005. This June, the President signed into law legislation making technical corrections to the 2005 bill, which included language, which we have provided to each of you, that requires the \$2.4 million in funds be expended on a study conducted in a route neutral manner, defined as “considering all practicable routes, in addition to any potential route previously considered”. Corridor neutrality is intended to ensure that the study is conducted in an objective and open-minded manner without a predetermined corridor in mind, so that we did not simply adopt the same corridor which has been proposed for a surface extension; after all, what may or may not make sense for an at-grade proposal, may have very little relevance to what makes most sense for a tunnel.

As you are well aware, the Los Angeles Metropolitan Authority (MTA) and the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) are moving ahead with technical studies of potentially viable corridors for the Route 710 Tunnel. This \$11.4 million study includes \$2.4 million in federal funds Rep. Schiff obtained for the study in 2005. He has asked Caltrans to consider this issue anew—in light of what we know now about traffic flow in the region—and not allow itself to be held captive by the long-held assumptions of the past. It is in this frame of reference that Caltrans should study whether a tunnel is feasible, and if so, where it should run. Only then will

it will help us determine whether the elusive common ground after all these years may be underground.

This study will only be useful if it is conducted fairly, objectively, dispassionately and without a conclusion in mind. It will have no credibility if the community perceives that certain viable corridors were deliberately ignored, others favored without reference to the facts, or that the authors of the report began with the conclusion they wished to reach and worked backwards. It is the Congressman's desire to avoid this result at all costs, which would not only fail to shed any light on whether a tunnel makes sense and if so, where it might run, but would also represent a tragic waste of taxpayer dollars.

Earlier this year, Congressman Schiff wrote to every one of the cities represented here today asking for suggestions of corridors that should be considered in the study. Several cities and community members have suggested corridors to Caltrans already and Caltrans has expressed willingness to accept more suggestions before the study commences. Rep. Schiff feels this input and the study of these corridors are crucial to ensuring corridor neutrality. Who better to suggest potential corridors than the communities affected by the proposed tunnel and it would be unjust to exclude any reasonable suggestions. This study offers us the best opportunity to look at this issue anew and for all communities to have a say in where the tunnel should run. When the study is completed, every community should feel that its input on the matter has been analyzed and evaluated fairly.